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UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002947

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XOX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
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ROME FOR MFO

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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Ha'aretz reported that in a recent IDF Intelligence (MI) assessment doubted the likelihood for success at the regional peace summit. According to MI, the Palestinians are looking for immediate gains, however in return they will either postpone or fail to carry out their commitments, primarily in countering terrorist activity. Political and defense sources who saw the MI assessment told Ha'aretz Wednesday that analysts believe that PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas will not be able to assert control over the West Bank cities if security responsibility is passed to his forces. Currently, the IDF operates in Palestinian urban centers to counter terrorism, while the Palestinians are assigned policing duties. Ha'aretz further said that the report expresses concerns over the pressure being applied by the PA on the US to push Israel for more goodwill gestures ahead to the summit.

All media quoted Abbas as saying on Wednesday in an interview to a Palestinian television station that the Palestinians want to establish a state on 6,205 square kilometers of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and east Jerusalem. This marks the first time that Abbas has referenced a specific number for the size of a future Palestinian state. Abbas said that his demand for a full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank is backed by UN resolutions. Abbas did leave the door open for border adjustments amounting to a land swap. Yediot understood that Abbas's speech allowed for the retention by Israel of areas such as Gush Etzion. (The Jerusalem Post quoted top Palestinian negotiator Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) as saying on Wednesday that the Palestinians are ready to yield parts of the West Bank and Jerusalem to Israel, if compensated with an equal amount of territory.) The media reported that he reiterated his demand that the problem of Palestinian refugees be solved and that he intends to bring any permanent agreement to a referendum. Leading media quoted Abbas as saying because of the scope of participation by Arab countries in the Annapolis meeting, all participants would pay a price for failure. Ha'aretz reported that Abbas is scheduled to meet today with Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs David Welch in preparation for next week's visit by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Maariv reported that Defense Minister Ehud Barak has ordered a halt in construction inside the Gush Etzion, Ma'aleh Adumim, and Ariel settlements. The newspaper said that the purpose of the move is to

pressure the settler leadership into removing unauthorized outposts

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday the central committee of the Yisrael Beiteinu party made a "surprising" decision to make "keeping Jerusalem Israel's undivided capital" one of its three red lines ahead of the Annapolis meeting.

Israel Radio and Ha'aretz's Web site cited the London-based Al-Hayat as saying, based on a French source, that Israel is convinced that the two IDF soldiers abducted by Hizbullah in July 2006 are no longer alive. The media reported that Israel calls this speculation and says that the soldiers are assumed to be alive.

Israel Radio reported on an IDF incursion into Gaza today. The radio reported that in Jenin Border Police killed an armed Fatah activist who was reportedly preparing a terrorist attack. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that on August 25 Israeli security forces arrested two Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militants who on the same day helped two Gaza terrorists cross into Israel.

All media reported that on Wednesday State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss issued an interim order preventing the cabinet from appointing a new accountant general to replace Yaron Zelekha. As ombudsman, Lindenstrauss has the authority to grant protection to officials who uncover corruption. Zelekha uncovered the Bank Leumi affair involving PM Ehud Olmert.

Outgoing Deputy IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Kaplinsky was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot that the IDF will eventually have to make an incursion into parts of Gaza and remain there for months.

Israel Radio quoted a senior Israeli political source as saying that Israel is disappointed by comments made on Wednesday by Russian President Vladimir Putin in meetings with French President Nicolas Sarkozy that he has seen no evidence indicating that Iran is attempting to produce a nuclear weapons. However, major media reported that later during the day Putin told a delegation of 11 European Jewry leaders that Iranian nuclear weapons are a "strategic threat." Putin emphasized that nuclear weapons in Iranian hands was also a strategic threat to Russia, even more than to other countries. This is because the missiles Iran can launch can easily reach Russia -- not other European countries or the US.

Leading media reported that on Wednesday the US House Foreign Affairs Committee approved a measure calling the killings of Armenians early in the 20th century genocide. The move was in defiance of President Bush's attempt to persuade Congressional members to reject it. Ha'aretz quoted Armenian Archbishop Aris Shirvanian from Jerusalem as saying: "The Turks are not the only ones who believe the way to Washington passes through Jerusalem. We also know that this alliance is very important, and the day Israel recognizes the Armenian genocide, the US administration will, too." Ha'aretz said that the "almost mystical belief" that Israel and the Jewish lobby have the power to sway votes on Capitol Hill is sometimes reminiscent of the conspiracy theory in the style of the protocols of the Elders of Zion, and that this is probably the one thing the Turks and Armenians have in common in their historic war over the recognition of the Armenian holocaust.

Yediot ran a feature about Israelis doing brisk business with Burma (Myanmar).

Leading media cited a New York Times story that Secretary Rice believes that the information that Israel passed on to the US regarding the September 6 raid on Syria is not reliable, while Vice President Dick Cheney claims that the information is credible.

Yediot and Ma'ariv reported that on November 3-5 the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution will hold an Israeli-Palestinian-American dialogue during its fourth annual Mideast policy forum in Jerusalem and Amman.

Major media reported that on Wednesday the Security-Diplomatic Cabinet decided to provide anti-missile protection to all Israeli airliners.

Ha'aretz quoted the office of Defense Minister Barak that he does not intend to interfere in the legal dispute over the final report of the Winograd Commission. Barak does not intend to order the head of the defense team at the IDF Advocate General (MAG), Colonel Orna David, to rescind her letter to the commission. In her letter, she asked the commission to verify reports that it does not intend to issue warning letters to officers who may be personally affected by the findings in its final report. In her letter, David warned that unless such warning letters were issued and the right to respond granted to the officers in question, MAG would petition the High Court of Justice. Ha'aretz reported that Likud Knesset Member Yuval Steinitz called on Barak to order David to "put an end to the absurdity" in which the IDF is confronting a government committee of investigation in the halls of the Supreme Court.

Ha'aretz cited a Reuters report quoting Hamas as saying on Wednesday that it would hold reconciliation talks with Chairman Abbas's Fatah faction. Hamas hinted it might be ready to give up control of the Gaza Strip.

Geopolitologist Arnon Soffer from the University of Haifa was quoted as saying in an extensive interview with The Jerusalem Post that he did not recommend that Israel kill Palestinians, but that he said that Israel would have to kill them -- because of the pressure at the border with Gaza.

Ma'ariv reported that Ehud Barak has allowed a Palestinian youth soccer team to leave Gaza for Jordan in order to participate in the Asian Youth Championship.

The Jerusalem Post quoted officials as saying on Wednesday that Israel has agreed to grant residency permits to thousands of Palestinians who have been living illegally in the West Bank on expired visitors' visas as a new confidence-building gesture to Abbas. Ha'aretz, Ma'ariv, and The Jerusalem Post reported that the High Court of Justice decided on Wednesday in a precedent-setting ruling that Israeli labor laws will be applied to Palestinians working in West Bank settlements.

The Jerusalem Post reported on the activity of the Arcobaleno-Rainbow Theater comprising young Arabs, Jews, Druze, and Circassians from different communities in the Galilee.

Maariv reported that despite President Hugo Chavez's hostile attitude to Israel, a Venezuelan TV network is broadcasting a documentary series favorably depicting the history of Zionism.

Ha'aretz published the results of a Dialog poll conducted this week:

Do you support the talks between PM Olmert and Chairman Abbas?

Yes: 51%; No: 42%; Undecided: 7%.

Should investigations against Olmert be frozen?

No: 64%; Yes: 28%; Undecided: 8%.

Mideast:

Summary:

Dov Weisglass, top diplomatic adviser to former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "True, the Roadmap was adopted and approved by the Palestinian Legislative Council, but from the outset, the Palestinians found it difficult to implement it, and are most likely happy to discover that Israel is not seriously demanding its implementation."

Very liberal columnist Meron Benvenisti, deputy mayor of Jerusalem from 1971 to 1978, wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The ruling Jewish community will continue, even when it becomes a minority, to force [a] split on the Palestinians with the usual means."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "There is nothing that makes the threat of force more credible than its use, so diplomats should be the first to congratulate Israel for taking concrete action to back the objectives of Western diplomacy."

Washington correspondent Hilary Leila Krieger and correspondent Caleb Ben-David wrote in The Jerusalem Post: "The Israeli strike on Syria last month has become a Rorschach test of sorts for Bush administration policy makers."

Block Quotes:

I. "And Israel Is Silent"

Dov Weisglass, top diplomatic adviser to former prime minister Ariel Sharon, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (10/11): "Ariel Sharon's government had two major diplomatic achievements in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: The Roadmap conditioned permanent status negotiations on the Palestinian Authority preventing terror; and 2) President Bush's letter to Prime Minister Sharon that states the United States' positions of not demanding withdrawal to the 1967 borders, that the large Jewish settlement blocs will remain in Israel's hands; and no return of refugees to Israel but rather to the newly established Palestinian state.... The public Palestinian position being pushed in advance of the international conference, ignores this entirely. And Israel is silent. True, the Roadmap was adopted and approved by the Palestinian Legislative Council, but from the outset, the Palestinians found it difficult to implement it, and are most likely happy to discover that Israel is not seriously demanding its implementation. And another thing to remember: The Roadmap ... is a document accepted by all nations and received the validity of a UN Security Council resolution. As for the President's letters: the Palestinians never agreed to the US position, and in the case too, the Palestinians were not sorry to discover that Israel was not publicly demanding its implementation. The US has a central role in any Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and because of its special standing, only the US can bring the negotiating sides to an agreement.... Of course it is impossible to know what is being said in the secret channel of negotiations, but in this part of the world, a great deal of weight -- sometimes decisive weight -- is given, in fact, to public positions. The media creates expectations on both sides and determines the sense of an achievement or of a failure. Israel, therefore, must publicly and decisively use its diplomatic assets, because if it does not, they will disappear. And that must not happen."

II. "Splintering as a Strategy"

Very liberal columnist Meron Benvenisti, deputy mayor of Jerusalem from 1971 to 1978, wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (10/11): "The ruling Jewish community will continue, even when it becomes a minority, to force [a] split on the Palestinians with the usual means -- the carrot and the stick, dictating the agenda, threats, collective punishments and bribery. This will preserve and even deepen the lack of coordination, the conflicting interests, and the weakness of the splintered Palestinian communities..... Israeli propaganda has no interest in stressing the achievements of this split; on the contrary, Israel aims at erecting an 'existential threat' scarecrow that portrays a monolithic adversary that relies on the dark forces of 'Islam-fascism'.... That is why this strategy can succeed; attention is diverted to marginal issues such as the Jewish National Fund and the 'division of Jerusalem,' and even those who are informed and well-versed, are surprised when the fragmentation is brought to their attention. It is not a Nelson Mandela that the Palestinians need, but rather a Giuseppe Garibaldi, who should rise from their midst and unite them."

III. "Force and Diplomacy"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (10/11): "The New York Times reported on Wednesday that the still mysterious Israeli strike in Syria last month has sparked a raging debate in Washington's corridors of power. At the center is reported Israeli intelligence that North Korea was helping Syria develop nuclear weapons. The debate has fractured along now-familiar fault lines, with Vice President Dick Cheney and conservative hawks in the administration portraying the Israeli intelligence as credible and arguing that it should cause the United States to reconsider its

diplomatic overtures to Syria and North Korea,' the report states. 'By contrast, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her allies within the administration have said they do not believe that the intelligence presented so far merits any change in the American diplomatic approach'.... Using their whole brains, much of Washington officialdom, it seems, quietly opposed the Israeli strike, seeing it as a wrench thrown in the cogs of diplomacy. But is it really so smart to see force and diplomacy as conflicting alternatives? The terror-sponsoring states certainly do not..QDoes this mean the West should respond in kind? Of course not. But it is no less absurd to argue that force, or even the threat of force, has no place in Western policy.... There is nothing that makes the threat of force more credible than its use, so diplomats should be the first to congratulate Israel for taking concrete action to back the objectives of Western diplomacy. Just as we need to use all of our brains, in a world of serious and growing threats, the West needs to employ all the tools at its disposal in a wise and integrated manner."

IV. "As American Officials Argue over the Implications of the IDF Strike in Syria, Israel Can Take Solace in its Ability to Go it Alone"

Washington correspondent Hilary Leila Krieger and correspondent Caleb Ben-David wrote in The Jerusalem Post (10/11): "The Israeli strike on Syria last month has become a Rorschach test of sorts for Bush administration policy makers, many of whom are viewing the incident in relation to how they think the US should proceed on diplomatic nonproliferation initiatives.... Bush administration officials don't like to talk on the record about how the Israeli air strike has factored into policy in North Korea, and Rice avoided the Syrian incident when meeting with a group of Jewish leaders last week, according to those familiar with the meeting. But it was reported that [Assistant Secretary of State Chris] Hill brought up the incident with the North Koreans. The State Department officially reiterates the importance of nonproliferation as a goal of the Six-Party talks."

JONES